

Geography and Education: a panel discussion

1998 Meetings,
Western Division of the Canadian
Association of Geographers
Kwantlen University College, Richmond
Campus
Chair,
Len Evenden, Simon Fraser University

A feature of this year's annual Western Division meeting was the panel discussion on Geography and Education. Originating with Leah Skretkowicz, the suggestion to highlight Geography's relation to educational concerns recognized the continuing importance of this issue to members of the Division. Many of the Division's members must necessarily spend most of their time on issues of how to develop Geography and good pedagogy, and the panel session provided an opportunity to raise issues that help to keep in focus what is a necessary and continuing discussion.

Various aspects of this general concern were highlighted in the presentations, and in the written summaries of comments as outlined below.

Doug Nicol emphasized the traditions of how to approach the teaching of Geography, noting the necessity of coming to terms with new technologies and the desirability of interaction with educators at all levels. Margaret North similarly emphasized the need to collaborate with school educators, giving information on teachers' relative lack of training in Geography. She further emphasized the difficulty in making the case for Geography in decision-making circles regarding provincial curriculum development, but held out hope for progress to be made by seeking out the possibilities of post-secondary collaboration at an informal level -- such as in shared field trips. Rod MacKinnon outlined the recent experience of the department at the University College of the Cariboo, especially in the development of the new full degree program. A key feature of integrating assignments and field work across courses carries implications for both the coherence of the degree structure and the cost of mounting the degree. Lastly, Matthew Ferguson outlined some of the conditions

and advantages of co-ordinating degree programs with active co-operative programs that dovetail students' academic work with employment opportunities.

In all, this well-attended session, held at the end of the day, provided a point of association in a day otherwise filled with smaller and over-lapping sessions reporting on recent research. In so doing, it provided a moment when colleagues and students of all sub-disciplinary persuasions could come together in common purpose.

Panel Presentation

Doug Nichol
Department of Geography
University College of the Fraser Valley

When the phone call came to ask if I would participate in this panel on Geography and Geographical Education, I was glued to my computer, virtually preoccupied in cyberspace. I had been like that for several hours, searching out sites and links on geographical topics. When the idea of New Directions was mentioned, it took only a second or two to think of what I was doing at that moment, and agree to say a few words on this panel.

But beyond wrestling with the hardware and software and the Internet, I was really doing something else. Specifically, I was trying to decide if a private website on groundwater resources had any geographical value for a regional Geography of British Columbia course I was writing for the WorldWideWeb. The criteria I was using were these:

- did it contribute to our knowledge of the biophysical environment ?
- did it further our understanding of the relationship between people and the physical world?
- did it provide insight into the spatial distribution of the resource? OR
- did it add in any way to our appreciation of the character of the region or the personality of the place in which it was found?

In thinking about what I was actually doing, it struck me that what I was doing was not particularly new in any geographical sense at all, but, in fact, was really pretty old hat. It was the near-year 2000 version

of William Pattison and the Four Traditions of Geography. [Journal of Geography, 1964]

For most years of the past 25, I have taught some 200 first and second year college students. For most years of the past 15, I have also tutored some additional 150 second year regional and economic geography students through distance education at the B.C. Open University.

So the overwhelming bulk of my geography teaching experience has been at the lower levels, and as those of you who know the nature of B.C. college geography programs can attest, that experience ranges over the entire field of geography. Since the early 1970s, I, like many of my college colleagues, have been living examples of the Pattisonian model. Interestingly, we have taught these students a lot of geography, but few of us have had any opportunity to teach these students how to teach geography. Yet if my lifetime of some 8000 students is at all representative of all of our geography students, the overwhelming bulk of them who go on further, go on into some form of teaching.

What interests me about these students is the fact that the greatest number of the teachers whom I have taught geography are now at the opposite end of the education system than we, as academic geographers, are. And many - at both ends - see the difference between what they are doing geographically and what we are doing geographically as very great indeed.

I think the differences - from traditional geography perspectives - are not so great at all. And I think these teachers, and necessarily their students, represent a group of people we need to think more about if we are concerned about the health of geography and interested in new directions for geographic education at the college and university levels. Not only are there lots of them out there, but they tend to be a very enthusiastic lot.

Conclusions

Here are some conclusions - that more or less flow, albeit weakly in places, from the data bank of my students and their experiences....

1. Let's recognize the value of new technology like the Internet - in giving a new immediacy to the traditional viewpoints of geography - the spatiality of the world and the comparative study of places, for example.

2. Let us, as geographers, increase our efforts in the area of teaching teachers to teach geography by increasing and decentralizing the opportunities to do so.

3. Let us, in recognizing where and at what educational level the bulk of the teachers of geography are, begin to think about multi-level cooperation in areas such as professional development, fieldwork, and other educational ventures.

4. Let us recognize, in contemplating such multi-level ventures, that models like the Pattison model, despite its very great age and simplicity, provide syntheses of the geographical perspective that is useful at all levels of education, and particularly at those where the bulk of our potential students are found.

Panel Presentation Geographical Education and Provincial Contexts:

Curriculum, teaching and resources

Margaret E. A. North
University of British Columbia
and Chair of the Education Committee,
Western Division of the Canadian
Association of Geographers

In order for our discipline to survive and prosper in this province, or indeed in any political jurisdiction, we, the professional geographers in the post-secondary institutions have to be proactive in the training of geographers at all levels. There are three key elements to the success of geography, or any discipline in the school system. We need to understand what these elements are and how we can influence them in a beneficial way. The elements are:

- the curriculum that defines what is to be taught
- the teachers who are licensed and legislated to teach this curriculum
- the resources available to support the teaching and learning of the prescribed curriculum

Curriculum

The development of curriculum in BC is in the hands of the Curriculum Branch of the Ministry of Education. In the 30 years that I have been involved with this branch of the Ministry, it has only had one geographer on staff and that is in the last 3 years. The curriculum branch, or whatever it may be called, is made up of professional civil servants and teachers seconded to the ministry for several years. The majority of civil servants that I have met over the years have had little, if any, geographical training, and most had no idea at all of the content of modern Geography. This is not surprising when one realises that, apart from one physical and resource geography course taught at Grade 12 as an elective, there is no geography course so called in the BC school system. Geography content lies buried in the compulsory Social Studies that is taught from Kindergarten to Grade 11. Thus a large number of students graduate never having heard of geography or thinking that it deals only with the physical world and its resource potential.

At fairly regular intervals all subjects taught in the schools have their curriculum reviewed. Social Studies has been under revision since 1995. At the revision stage this committee attempts to insert more geography, though we also always suggest the radical departure of actually offering a few consecutive years of geography as a stand alone subject. We back up this "new" idea by pointing to the well developed geography curriculum in numerous other leading western and Asian countries. We make this pitch to whoever is the current Minister. So far we have failed to advance this idea at all. So we fall back on inserting more specific geography content into the Social Studies.

When we have established our credentials and built our contacts with the ever-shifting set of civil servants responsible for the curricula revisions, we may be invited to critique the various stages of the developing curriculum. Our criticisms may even be welcomed and acted on, along with the comments made by teachers. We have never obtained a place on the revision committee for Social Studies which is usually made up of teachers and government curricula experts, though there has always been post-secondary represent-

atives on the Geography 12 revisions. The curriculum that results from the revision process is eventually placed in the schools along with resources designed to support it and the teachers are provided with more or less in-service training to help them address the new material. The curriculum revision has already been in process for 5 years! It has been the subject of two stalling actions by the BC Teachers' Federation, the most recent in February, resulting in the Premier announcing that the entire Socials review was on hold. The reason given for the latest hold-up is that the BCTF perceives that there is a lack of resources and there are no guaranteed funds set aside for in-service training. There have been on-going problems of Social Studies, raised at all the Professional Specialist Association meetings that I have attended over the years. The teachers have a right to be bitter about this constant under-funding, as the Ministry's periodic reviews of students' performance in Socials are usually highly critical of the students' lack of knowledge of the curriculum.

Teachers

The second element is the teacher, without whom the curriculum is useless. We in this Association are indirectly or directly responsible for the geographical knowledge of the majority of the social studies teachers in this province. These teachers mainly have degrees that have involved some geography instruction at the post-secondary institutions in BC. Very few have geography degrees but many have the equivalent of minors in our discipline. So we have had an influence on the past training of teachers and continue to influence the present and the future teachers.

Our influence should not be solely through the purveying of factual knowledge and technical skills, but we should be demonstrating in our own classrooms teaching styles and skills that can serve as models for their own teaching. After all, there are no courses given on how to teach geography as a subject in the BC Education Faculties, so we are the only geography teachers that many trainee teachers have ever known. We should also be able to put across the enthusiasm that we feel for our discipline. And we should show how to integrate across the curriculum, thus

demonstrating our commonly expressed belief that geography is the integrating discipline *par excellence*. If we don't do this consciously and conspicuously in all our under-graduate courses, where will the future social studies teachers learn these essential facts about our discipline? And if they don't learn from us, how can they teach them to their students who in turn will be ours?

Resources

The third essential element is the resources needed to help the teachers "deliver" the curriculum, in the Ministry's jargon, and also the resources to help the students to learn. These are really two sorts of materials, written or constructed at levels appropriate to the age of the audience. Here too we can and must offer help to the schools. Teachers' manuals and in-service training to go with them is critical in the first few years of any new curriculum. And it is at this time that the teachers feel least secure as their old teaching notes and classroom activities are superseded, hence they are most likely to seek assistance, to read new material sources, to attend extra instructional sessions. We should be there for them in their time of need, if only for the selfish aim of creating more geographers to be passed on to us! In the post-secondary institutions we are all busy people, but we all have time to read within our narrow specialties, and to take field trips to local or foreign areas. We all have knowledge that we could easily share. We, or at least our institutions, also have considerable resources in the form of current journals, libraries, videos, slide sets, air photos, satellite imagery, maps and computer software programmes that are far in excess of what most of the surrounding schools have. Yet we are all basically funded from the same source, the tax-payers of the province, so therefore we are obligated to share.

We might also consider the possibility of writing for the teachers. For example guides to the local area could be developed in many cases by extension of existing field trip notes. To encourage the use of fieldwork, surely the way into the minds of all students, the teachers and/or their senior students could be offered places on field excursions if buses were not filled. Thus we could demonstrate the use of fieldwork and

how to organise it. At the very least the local school Socials classes could be visited.

The geography undergraduates at UBC have set up a system of visits back to their old high schools to talk about the geography undergraduate programme. We could invite classes to see our departments so that the students who may not elect Geography 12 at least know that there is such a subject that is alive and well at the post secondary level in BC. We have nothing to lose by sharing this knowledge and these resources with the schools, and everything to win by educating the future tax payers about our existence and the utility of our subject.

Panel Presentation:

Dr. Robert MacKinnon
Chair, Department of Social and
Environmental Studies,
The University College of the Cariboo

I have been invited to address this audience of geography faculty and students because the University College of the Cariboo has recently established a geography Major programme. After considerable discussion on campus, and an external review of the college's geography programme, which included among its recommendations the appointment of a new faculty member, the programme received Ministry approval in March, 1997. By September, twenty-five students had declared their intention to complete the new U.C.C. geography Major in human geography, the first of its kind in the southern interior of B.C.

In overall structure this programme is similar to other geography Major programmes in that it requires the completion of at least 51 credits of geography courses (21 at the first and second year and at least 30 at the third and fourth year). The programme also displays its indebtedness to the University of British Columbia and its partnership agreement with U.C.C which has permitted the completion of U.B.C. General B.A. and B.Sc.. degrees at U.C.C. since 1989.

However, with our institution's recently acquired independent degree granting status, it has been possible to develop more unique University College programmes and I

believe the U.C.C. geography Major is one such programme.

Following the completion of foundation courses in geo-morphology, climatology and introductory human, regional, environmental, economic and urban geography, U.C.C. students focus on three streams of advanced studies in human geography: cultural-historical, urban economic and environmental. These streams reflect the teaching and research interests of U.C.C.'s six full-time and two (or more) part-time faculty.

To provide the methodological foundations for advanced course work in geography a new 200 level course entitled "Introduction to Geographical Analysis" was introduced in September, 1997 (Geog 270). The principal aims of this course are to promote "geographic thinking" and to strengthen the analytical and problem solving skills of students planning to declare their geography Major. Founded on the belief that a keen ability to ask and to answer geographic questions lies at the heart of a solid geographic education, this course, taught in a five hour per week format, covers basic field surveying, computer mapping, data collection, data analysis and map interpretation. While this is a required course for geography Major students, the more specialized Introduction to G.I.S. (Using Arc Info) course (Geog 275) is an elective.

With the relatively small number of faculty in the U.C.C. programme it has also been possible to closely integrate content and methods presented in one course with assignments and topics addressed in other courses. For example, the use of a computer mapping application introduced in a first

year course is required to complete a third year land use assignment in an advanced historical geography course, an archival research topic at third year involves data collection in a systematic manner outlined in first year etc. This close curriculum coordination should ultimately enhance students' abilities to integrate geographical concepts with concrete "real world" situations across the geography curriculum. Combined with a commitment to move our explorations from the seminar room to the real world as much as possible, these types

of initiatives should ultimately improve students' understanding of the spatial dimensions of the relations between people and environments and the connections between people and places.

Although the U.C.C. geography programme is relatively young, we have already achieved some significant successes. The Royal Canadian Geographic Society has recognized two of our students with a research grant for their examination of "Inner City Redevelopment in Kamloops, B.C."; a regional consulting firm recruited three recently declared geography Majors to complete part-time research contracts between September and December, 1997 and one of U.C.C.'s seven geography Major students planning to graduate in June, 1998, has been accepted into a Graduate School to commence advanced studies in geography in September, 1998.

With the recent establishment of a substantial endowment fund by the estate of a well known Kamloops physician who had an life-long interest in geography (Dr. Margaret Neave) -- which permits the distribution of five generous geography scholarships per year -- I believe that geography is not only on solid ground in the southern interior of B.C., it is forging "new directions".

**Panel Presentation:
Co-operative Education in Geography**

Matt Ferguson
Co-op Co-ordinator
Geography and Earth Scienc
Simon Fraser University

Over the past few years there has been a significant growth in Co-operative Education programs in British Columbia. Increasingly, students, employers and academic institutions are acknowledging the benefits of enhancing a students academic experience with related work experience.

Benefits to Academic Institutions:

Increases ties between post-secondary institutions and the larger community. In this era of shrinking budgets and academic disciplines having to justify their existence (e.g. Ontario Premier Mike Harris questioning the value of Geography),

increased participation in Co-op is another indicator that post-secondary institutions are playing a valuable role in society.

Increases access to external funding and research partnerships. The frequent interaction between Co-op programs and other organizations (as a Coordinator I liaise with 100's of companies a semester), has tremendous potential to provide access to alternate sources of funding, equipment and knowledge.

Enriches the classroom environment. As an instructor it is sometimes difficult to teach certain components of a course (especially field-oriented courses) because students lack the experience to grasp an idea. Co-op students have worked in the field and are often able to expand on an idea, thereby increasing interaction within the classroom. Important in attracting new students.

The experience at SFU has been that over 90% of entering students who were actively recruited by the University, listed the availability of Co-op as one of their top three deciding factors.

Benefits to Employers:

Access to the knowledge of academic institutions. As noted, there is tremendous potential for mutually beneficial exchange of information. In Co-op we have numerous companies who regularly rely on Co-op students to provide support in areas both internal and external to their core areas of production.

Highly motivated and experienced students. Students must complete a series of interviews and workshops in addition to their regular course load before being admitted to the Co-op program. Once in the program, we constantly work with students to expand their skills and abilities.

Co-op performs some human resources functions. When employers want to hire a student, all they have to do is fax us a job description and we will coordinate the hiring process. Further, while the student is on a work term we regularly check in with the employer to make sure the student is meeting expectations.

Opportunity to recruit employees. Many organizations integrate co-op as part of their

HR development, infact, some refer to a workterm as a four or eight month interview!

Benefits to Students:

Builds confidence in students. Having the opportunity to work with students as they achieve their goals is the most rewarding aspect of being a Co-op Coordinator. The Co-op students I work with are confident in their future because they have gained some experience, defined career goals, and are now implementing strategies to achieve them.

Helps motivate students and enhances their education. As we all know, some students when selecting courses try to avoid those which they will find more difficult (e.g. computers, statistics, etc.). It amazes me how those same students will return after one work semester and realize the necessity of taking the courses they wanted to avoid.

Students learn what geographers do. One significant problem facing geography as a discipline is that generally it is not well understood what geographers do (too often, including our own students). Co-op can offer experience in the practical application of geography so students are more aware of, and take pride in, the tremendous value and diversity of the discipline.

Due to limited time, the discussion (debate?) regarding Co-operative Education at the WCAG had to be cut short before I could re-emphasize one key point. I cannot stress enough that Co-op is not just 'skills'; it is not 'the answer' to a departments problems; but what it can offer is a tremendous opportunity to *expand* and *enhance* a student's educational experience. Granted, Co-op is not for everyone, but as we seek new ways to enrich the quality of post-secondary education, it is proving to be a very beneficial option.

[Editor's note: I hope that others who attended the panel discussion will wish to share their own experiences and observations with others. I'll be happy to publish other contributions (send to: <horsfall@sfu.ca>) in future editions of the Newsletter]

C.A.G. WESTERN DIVISION

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 1997-8**
Margaret North, Chair
UBC

It had been intended that this annual report would focus on the final versions of the Social Studies K-11 and Geography 12 curricula that were supposed to have been approved this March and be implemented in the BC schools starting this September. As you may have heard, the Premier announced in February that the entire Social Studies review process is now on hold. For how long is not clear. Our understanding, which may be incorrect, is that this action has been taken because of concerns raised by the Social Studies Provincial Specialists Association Executive. This level of intervention is unusual, even unprecedented in the history of the school curricula development in BC. At least the Social Studies curriculum can now claim the dubious distinction of having been the subject of an announcement by the Premier!

Various members of this Education Committee have invested considerable time and effort in reviewing several versions of the curriculum documents, most recently (December 1997) in the form of Instructional Resource Packages. We doubt that any curriculum reviews are without controversy but the on-going saga of the BC Social Studies K-11 has been more contentious than most. This is at least the second intervention by the PSA. We are informed that the reason for shelving the curriculum, (a set of documents that resulted from a 4 year review process based on extensive assessment of the Social Studies needs by polling the teachers,) is the lack of resources to teach the curriculum. This was certainly one of our criticisms of the IRPs when we reviewed them. But lack of resources has always plagued Social Studies curriculum, as teachers have pointed out at various PSA meetings over the past several decades. Possibly the elected representatives in the PSA have finally decided to act on this re-iterated complaint. However there is a catch 21. The development of resources to match a curriculum has to wait for that curriculum to be finalised and fixed. Hence shelving it at this stage is certainly not going to facilitate the development of these absent resources.

The Premier has reportedly received a large number of letters objecting to the further delay of the curriculum, including letters from major publishers who have been in process of developing the resources that are said to be lacking.

It had been this committee's intention to initiate a series of in-service workshops in schools to address the new curriculum. Part of purpose of the workshops would be to address the lack of resources in the schools, as well as lack of particular skills and content knowledge amongst social studies teachers who would be addressing this new curriculum. We would have been asking for advice and offers from all the post-secondary institutions on how best to deploy our regionally dispersed resources to assist our colleagues in the school system. (Assistance not without self-interest obviously!) This action is now on hold as we are once more waiting for the curriculum to appear to inform us of the critical areas of focus, as well as to provide the leverage that the insecurity of teaching a new curriculum creates.

Meanwhile the new curriculum for Geography 12 seems to be going forward. The physical process orientation continues to be modified to give an increasing emphasis on resource management, and human geography topics are edging their way in. The more conventional and older teachers may regret this change, but as professional geographers we can only applaud the move to make the only named Geography course in the BC schools somewhat more representative of the human and physical mix that we recognise in our discipline. There is an increased emphasis on field studies and to help with this, both for the Geog 12 teachers and for all grades, (as the original Social Studies review documents had a similar emphasis,) UBC Geography department is hosting a Summer Institute focusing on the development and use of field work throughout the curriculum. This institute is financed through the Canadian Council of Geographic Education (CCGE) and the Royal Canadian Geographic Society(RCGS) and the organisation is in the hands of a number of experienced geography teachers, many of whom have attended previous CCGE summer institutes. (Money for the

regional summer institutes of the CCGE is available in alternate years, if other BC institutions are interested in putting forward proposals for the year 2000 please contact this committee.) More information on the 1998 Summer Institute is available on the Geography Department web site. (All spaces are currently taken.)

Members of the Education Committee work actively with the regional branch of the CCGE, chaired by Lis Dawson (Churchill School, Vancouver). M. North will be presenting the prizes at the BC finals of the Great Canadian Geography Challenge, at Sentinel Secondary, West Vancouver, on Saturday April 4th. Last years' winning team included Armand Gaudin, a second time winner, who eventually was a member of the Canadian team that won at the International Geography Olympics.

In February 1998 the CCGE organised a symposium of teachers, ministry representatives from each province and business leaders to discuss the feasibility of developing national standards in geography within provincial curricula. A report on the outcome of this meeting will be given at the CAG Annual Meeting in Ottawa University this June. As curriculum development is a provincial matter it will be interesting to see how this initiative will be carried forward. With the shelving of the Social Studies in BC there may be a vacuum into which the radical notion of abandoning Social Studies, at least in the upper grades, in favour of Geography and History, taught as separate subjects, might be intruded. This committee will explore this possibility in following its mandate to promote the discipline.

Education Committee 1997-8:
M.North(UBC) chair, R.Francis (Langara) past chair, E.Dawson(Churchill) CCGE rep, B.Dye(Sentinel) BCTF rep, P.Thomas(U.Vic)Education Faculty rep, J.Whitmore(U.Vic) Co-op Director.

WCAG folks,
The Society of Geography Students of UVIC (SOGS) had a great time at the Kwantlen Conference, and they did take a few snaps of their

fun to show friends. The GIFs are a bit slow to load, but they can be viewed at:

<http://office.geog.uvic.ca/dept/announce/gallery.html>

Let me know if your participating crew put some photos on the web, and I'll pass the info to SOGS.

John <jnewcomb@UVIC.CA>

**Augustana
University College**
Glen Hvenegaard

Student interest remains high in the geography program at Augustana. In-house research showed that geography had among the highest per-course enrolments on campus. Faculty member, Glen Hvenegaard, is also advisor for the new interdisciplinary degree in environmental studies.

This past May, a new course in Field Physical Geography was offered in the foothills and Rockies of west-central Alberta. Nineteen students took part in a variety of field trips and activities focussed on fluvial and glacial systems, soils, weather monitoring, ecosystems, mountain-building, and environmental impacts. This course was offered as part of the Outdoor Leadership Development Program, combined with a spring outdoor pursuits course. A new course on the Geography of the Canadian North will be offered next year, involving a 3-week canoeing trip planned for the summer of 1999 (again combined with an outdoor pursuits course).

In November, Glen Hvenegaard presented a paper at the Summit on Ecotourism and Adventure Travel in Edmonton. In December, he travelled to Kaikoura, New Zealand to present a paper on the social and economic aspects of ecotourism relevant to whale watching. He recently received an Action 21 Certificate of Environmental Citizenship. He remains active with IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas.

To learn more about our program, visit us at

<http://www.augustana.ab.ca/departments/geography>.

Capilano College
Brett McGillivray

There are few changes at Capilano College in terms of courses offered in Geography. The Sechelt Indian Band has developed a partnership with Capilano and SFU to develop a BEd program. It means the Geography of Canada course will become one component of this program.

Karen Ewing will be back for the Fall term (she was on a one year Paid Educational Leave). This means Cheryl Schreder (Karen's replacement) will be very part-time. John Meligrana, who has been teaching part-time at Cap for a number of years, will be teaching full-time at Bishops for the 1998/99 year.

Brett McGillivray has just completed a manuscript for the Geography of BC course entitled: "British Columbia: Peoples and Landscapes in Transition" --it is off to several publishers to see if there is interest.

Douglas College
Earl Noah

The last 6 months have been very busy at Douglas College.

Ian Joyce has been on leave conducting research into the Cuban fishery. Currently, he is teaching a SFU field school course to Cuba. Steven Marsh and Don McPhee were hired as term faculty to replace Ian.

The Habitat Restoration Management Program is finally fully funded and being offered at the David Lam campus. Susan Smythe was one of the initiators of this program which provides students with an advanced certificate in habitat restoration.

In tandem with the development of the Habitat Restoration Program, a GIS lab has been established at the David Lam campus. The lab is currently equipped with PANMAP, although ArcInfo may be added in the Fall.

Elizabeth Peerless taught the Geography 213 (Social Geography) course using videoconferencing technology and Earl Noah will teach the Geography 212 (Economic Geography) course using videoconferencing technology in the Fall.

Kwantlen University College
Leah Skretkovicz

We hosted the Western Division of the CAG Annual Meeting from March 12-14 at our Richmond Campus. Attendance was just over 200, with representation from post-secondary institutions in Alberta, British Columbia and the northwestern United States.

The Conference began with a Public Lecture on Thursday night by Dr. John Clague of the Geological Survey of Canada on "Natural Hazards in Southwestern British Columbia". Friday began with three field trips, one exploring the historical geology of Vancouver, the second examining the changing urban landscape of the Kwantlen catchment area, and the third exploring the cultural influence of a Sikh and a Buddhist temple. Friday ended with a banquet at the Richmond Inn featuring Dr. Roy Carlson from SFU's Archeology Department, speaking on early First Nations settlements along the Fraser River.

Saturday featured 47 papers in 12 sessions, as well as 5 poster presentations and a book publisher's exhibition. The paper and poster sessions broke down as follows according to institution: BC Open University, Camosun College, Kwantlen University College, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, Malaspina University College and University of Waterloo with one, Langara College and University College of the Cariboo with two, University College of the Fraser Valley and University of British Columbia with five, Simon Fraser University with seven, University of Northern BC with nine, and University of Victoria with twelve. Most noticeable in their absence was the University of Alberta with no papers presented or registrants in attendance. This is a sharp change from 1987, when at the WDCAG at SFU, there were thirty papers from the University of Alberta out of the eighty odd presented at that conference.

Saturday afternoon concluded with the very interesting panel discussion chaired by Dr. Len Evenden of SFU on "New Directions in Geography and Geographic Education.

A new feature at this year's conference was the student paper competition. Twenty undergraduate and graduate students asked that their presentations be included in the competition. Awards of a one year CAG membership went to:

Undergraduate: Kalbir Heer, UCC
Master's: Michelle Carr, UVIC
Doctoral: Andrew Murphy, UBC

The conference was well supported by faculty and students from many institutions, with many students making the long trek from UVIC, UNBC, UCC and CNC.

Many thanks to all of the participants and all who chaired sessions. Your efforts truly made this conference work as well as it did.

Our other departmental item of note is the addition of Rod Fowler as a full time regular faculty member in Human Geography.

Okanagan University College
Bill Hamilton

. Our suggested timetable for implementation of the Geography Major at OUC is as follows: *Letter of Intent: Spring 1998; *New Program Proposal: Fall 1998; *New hiring: Summer 1999; *New course development and approval: Winter 1998; *First offerings of new courses: Fall 1999; *Official beginning of Geography Major: Fall 1999 (students will be informed of its possible implementation in Fall 1998); *First graduates of the Major: Spring 2000. The Focus of the OUC Geography Major Environment/ Resources/ Development. Implementation of the plan requires hiring of one additional full-time professor to teach new courses required for the major: GEOG 2XX Cartography-Air Photo Interpretation; GEOG 3XX Resource Geography; GEOG 4XX Issues in Resource Management; GEOG 4XX GIS.

An innovative component of the proposal is coordination of efforts with the new Earth and Environmental Science Department in the Faculty of Science. Coordination would involve: 1) streamlining of course offerings in both Departments, i.e., GEOG 111-121 and Earth Science 145 or Geology 111 would be synthesized into two new courses at the first year level; 2) the sharing of (Physical Geography) professors and teaching duties between Departments; 3) creation of a number of courses in the Geography curriculum that could be used as core courses and program optional courses in the Earth & Environmental Science Department's expanded Major program: Freshwater Science theme could be supplemented with options in Environmental Biology, Environmental Science, etc. The new hiring will have specialization in the following areas: Physical Geography; Resources; GIS; and Cartography.

UBC
Robert North

At the Western Division, CAG meetings at Kwantlen, Andrew Murphy, a PhD student working with Ken Denike, won the prize for best student paper at the PhD level. Margaret North won one of the Coffee Mug of Distinction Awards presented at the annual banquet.

Nick Kontogeorgopoulos, PhD candidate, has been appointed Luce Professor of the Political Economy of Southeast Asia at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma.

Neil Coe, post-doctoral fellow, has been appointed Lecturer in the Department of Geography in the National University of Singapore.

A major event for the department has been the award of an NSERC Industrial Chair in Snow and Avalanche Research to Dave McClung. The application was submitted last summer, and this was followed by an NSERC site visit to UBC in the fall and a decision in January. The site visit included strongly supportive presentations by the Dean of Arts, Shirley Neuman, and the President of UBC, Martha Piper. The Chair is the first of its type in the

world. In setting it up, NSERC was partnered by Canadian Mountain Holidays and Forest Renewal BC. Dave's research has attracted considerable interest in the media in the wake of a large number of avalanche-related deaths in BC this winter.

The Department was highly successful in the first round of the 1998-99 University Graduate Fellowship competition, winning approximately 9% of the whole amount of UGF funding available to the university. Of the 44 nominated students, 32 received awards totalling \$495,000, including renewals. In the second round the Department nominated two further candidates, one of whom was awarded \$15,000. In addition, two students have received NSERC fellowships.

Recent MA thesis completions include Andrew Hamilton (supervised by G. Wynn): Prospects of Place and Portraits of Progress in the Early Representations of the Queen Charlotte Islands, 1873-1922; and Maija Heimo

(supervised by A. Siemens): Prehispanic Wetland Agriculture South of Laguna Mandiga, Veracruz, Mexico.

The introduction of new courses and programs has slowed down in the past two or three years, but new courses in the fall are expected to include one by Graeme Wynn, "Ecology and Empire", dealing with aspects of the history of environmental attitudes. Also our Atmospheric Science program is in process of adjustment -- partly, as a program designed for small numbers of students, to cope with continually rising requirements regarding the minimum number of students with which a course is allowed to run. The nominal minimum for 1998-9 is 15, or 17 in extra-session courses. A course we expect to re-introduce in the fall of 1999 is the one long taught

by John Stager on the Geography of the Arctic. In slightly different form, it will be given by Greg Henry.

A number of colleagues have been producing Web-based courses, and Phil Austin obtained a substantial grant for developing a course in numerical methods in collaboration with Susan Allen of the Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences.

The new president of UBC, Martha Piper, has been visiting all departments at the rate of about four a week. Our turn came on March 17th. The visit included meetings with the faculty and, separately, graduate and undergraduate students; short presentations by faculty members; and a tour of the department. The visit seemed to go off well. In connection with the visit, the Department produced a departmental report of about 130 pages, including one- or two-page summaries of most of the research projects being undertaken by members of the faculty. Copies can be obtained from the Department, and the information will eventually be put on the Department's web page.

UCFV

Doug Nicol

The Geography Department at UCFV continues to experience enrollments that press very hard on most of our facilities, staff and faculty. Still, the new spaces at the Abbotsford Campus have proven themselves most satisfactory over the past year, though often cramped. The view from the Geography lab to the nearby fenland is one of the best features, as the photos in our online Department newsletter, Benchmarks, clearly show. (<http://arctic.ucfv.bc.ca/nicol/newsc.html>).

Faculty have scheduled a busy research season for 1998, with almost everyone off to one corner of the world or another. John Belec, our Department Head, is taking leave in September and hopes to visit Ottawa to complete some of his housing research. David Gibson, who will fill in for John as Head, spent May in Mexico with the Latin American Studies tour and then got his look at Ottawa early, with the CAG meetings there. Cherie Enns received a grant from International Education at UCFV and spent three weeks in Malaysia studying the multi-media super corridor. Doug Nicol is off to Holland for a month to look at various aspects of cultural and historical geography. Sandy Vanderburgh spent three weeks in New Zealand in May, delivering a presentation on his coastal research at Victoria University, and will then head off for another field research stint in southwest Washington for the balance of the summer.

Our staff lab assistant, Mira Majerovich, left us - after three years - to join her husband (and our former Chilliwack sessional instructor) Todd Randall in Hamilton, where Todd recently began working on his Ph.D. at McMaster. The Department hired a new lab assistant in May, Kathy Peet, who, from her B.Sc. experiences at UNBC, will add a new environmental component to the department. Given the size of lower level physical geography classes, Kathy will be introduced to the scene quickly.

Ian Okabe continues to maintain and upgrade the Department's computer facilities, and his work in the Abbotsford lab has been very helpful to an enthusiastic group of upper level geography students. Department, study tour, and faculty home pages, as well as our online newsletter, all reflect a growing presence on the World Wide Web.

New initiatives include a hoped-for increase of cross-border ventures with our geography colleagues at Huxley College, University of Western Washington. The UCFV geographers spent two days south of the line at our annual retreat, and shared a lunch overlooking Bellingham Bay with our WWU counterparts. Some good discussions on possibilities for cross-border research as well as joint course offerings were highlights of the meeting.

In another direction, Doug Nicol organized a Chilliwack Geography Teachers Group meeting for May, where teachers from local secondary and elementary schools got together with several faculty from the University College to talk over common issues. It was a very productive day, with a second meeting planned for early September to jointly plan November's Geography Awareness Week, an event we hope this year will reach across all grade levels in Chilliwack.

In all, a busy and exciting time at UCFV for Geography. We are looking forward to our turn at the Western Division annual meetings - in the Year 2000. We hope to include some Borderland sessions and continue on with discussions on geography and education generally. Mark your calendars.

UNBC Greg Halseth

Greg Halseth has presented papers at: CAG conference in Ottawa and at WCAG meeting in Richmond, as well as both Paper and Panel sessions at AAG conference in Boston (busy fellow!)

Greg is teaching a summer short course in Prince Rupert on the region's human geography. Course will be based out of the North Pacific Cannery museum site in Port Edward.

Research work for New Rural Economy project getting underway in Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge.

SSHRCC research work wrapping up in Quesnel, Williams Lake, and 100 mile House.

Rural Communities and New Information Technology research project being carried out with the CED Centre at SFU is completing its British Columbia work. International work involving the Czech Republic and Hungary will be completed by October. Research publications are available online as the project has launched its website at <http://www.sfu.ca/cedc/>

The FRBC project on Public Participation in the New Forest Economy is presently conducting the second round of field work in the communities of Kaslo, Clearwater, Powell River, Quesnel, Dawson Creek, and Smithers. The project will wrap up next summer with a series of workshops in these communities.

Reg Horne has presented a paper on the Mormon Cultural Region at the WCAG in Richmond and a paper on Using Hallmark Tourism Events for Economic Development at the Canadian Institute of Planners Meeting in Winnipeg (June 98). He has also submitted an article on the Trans-Canada Highway to the Encyclopedia of the Great Plains to be published next year and taught summer school at Brandon University during June.